1: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
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539 The Kûrds also relate the following allegorical story with reference to the same subject:

*The Prophet and the Angel.*[1]

When the Prophet—blessings upon him!—ascended to Paradise, the archangel Gabriel accompanied him in order to show him all the wonders of the heavens. The Prophet—blessings upon him!—observed an angel of majestic stature, who stood in an expectant attitude, bearing on his shoulders an enormous drum, and holding in his hand a long drumstick. The Prophet—blessings upon him!—asked who he was, and what was his occupation. The angel replied, "O messenger of Allah, my duty is, when a Mollah confers a benefit or bestows an alms, even were it but some broken food to a beggar, to beat the drum, and thus announce to all the angels of the heavens the benefit or the almsdeed of the theologian."

Upon this, the Prophet—blessings upon him!—asked the angel, "How many times hast thou beaten the drum since thou hast held this office?"

"I am still waiting," replied the angel; "and up to this hour I have not once beaten it."

Will it be always thus? Allah knows. The clergy of all religions perform for the most part but few acts of benevolence or charity, for they require of the people almsdeeds and benefits, and themselves give nothing to the poor.

771 795 The vague mysticism which is so closely interwoven with the doctrines of the Shia sect, to which the

[1] Jaba, Recueil, &c., p. 15.

1: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
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Persians belong, appears to have a greater charm for the Kûrdish mountaineers than the Semitic notion of an absolute and personal Allah, which is the dominant idea of the tenets held by the *Sûnni*, or "Orthodox" Osmanlis. The Dervish Orders, who constitute the mystics of Islam, are, consequently, extremely popular with the Kûrds, and the veneration of the women for the Sheikhs, or *pirs*, as they are called, whether living or dead, exceeds, if possible, that entertained for them by the Turkish women. For, indifferent as the Kûrds may be to the dogmas of Islam, they, like all highlanders, are exceedingly superstitious, and firmly believe in all the occult and spiritual powers laid claim to by the Dervish Sheikhs.

The saint whom the Kûrds hold in the highest reverence is the deceased Sheikh, Khaled of Sulimanieh, whom they consider equal to Abdul Kadr of Ghilân,[1] if not to the Prophet Mohammed himself, and deem it profanation to speak of by any other title than that of *Hawreti Mewlâna*—"Our Lord the Prophet." This Kûrdish *pir*, whose sayings his countrymen dignify by the name of *hâdis*,[2] belonged to the Nakshbendi Dervishes, a "contemplative" Order famed for the deep mystic piety of its members, and which has produced many saints eminent in the Moslem world. To the tombs of dead, or the *tekkés* of living, Dervishes, the Kûrdish

[1] A famous dervish who lived in the twelfth century, and founded the Order of the Kadiri. Wonderful stories are told of the supernatural powers possessed by his Sheikh, some of which may be found in *The Dervishes*, by J. P. Brown.

[2] The name given by Moslems to the sayings or "table talk," of Mohammed.

[3] The monasteries and temples in which the Dervishes reside and hold their services.

1: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
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Yezidis MN10



groves and alleys, and celebrate their religious rites with great rejoicing and festivity. The women in their gayest and richest dresses, their necks and heads hung with strings of silver coins, and with either a scarlet feather or a posy of roses or anemones in their turbans, dance with the men in rings, sometimes to the number of two hundred. The young girls make the most of their holiday, dancing to their hearts' content with their admirers or affianced lovers.

The large Kûrdish tribe of the Doudjîks, which is composed of several *thâïfés*, forms another heretical sect, called Kizilbakhs. They regard Ali, the first Khalif, as the personified Deity, thus attributing to him, as do the Ali Ilahîs of Persia, a much higher position than to the Prophet of Islam. And there is yet a third description of sectarians, called Baliki, who regard Ali as the latest manifestation of the Deity in human form. The more mystical among Moslems hold that all the great Prophets who have appeared from the creation of the world—Adam, Abraham, Moses, Elias, Christ, and Mohammed—were successive incarnations of the Divine Spirit, and that the founder of Islam, because the last, was the greatest. But the Balikis ignore Mohammed entirely. According to their saying, "He (the Deity) has showed Himself in a thousand ways, and many are in doubt; if he would show Himself in one way, many would believe." Warlike and unruly as are the members of this sect, the American missionaries have been very successful among them. Such, indeed, is the influence of this handful of men from the New World that they

1: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
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have persuaded some of the most turbulent, whom the Turks have never been able completely to subdue, to lay down their arms, and relinquish their trade of rebellion, robbery, and murder.[1]

[1] Comp. Consul Taylor, *Journ. R. Geog. Soc.* vol. xxxv. p. 29, who also says that the Bellki claim to be the descendants of Sharezer, or Sarasar, son of Sennacherib, who, with his brother Adrimelek, fled to Shamoun (south-east of Lake Van), after having murdered their father at Nineveh, and founded those dynasties, one of which was that of the Sassanians, or Sassanes. See also *Moses of Khor'ni*, I. p. 103, II. p. 145; and the *Geography* of the Vartabed Vartan in St. Martin, II. p. 431, referred to by Mr. Taylor, *loc. cit.*

language is Indo-European, closely related to Persian, and they were probably a part of that same movement which brought others of the Indo-European linguistic group, such as the Armenians, Hittites, and Persians, into the Middle East. Racially it is difficult to give an opinion, because little work of a modern nature has been undertaken among them. In the older parlance of physical anthropology, however, they exhibit traits considered much more characteristic of the races of Europe and Central Asia than of the Arabs to the south, such as blond hair, blue eyes, fair pigmentation, and round heads. They give immediate evidence, by these older criteria, of being a mixture. In religion they are Sunnite Muslims and are thus set off from the Shiite Iranians to the east. Whether this is the result of their original conversion or the continued influence of the Sunnite Turks and Turkomans is unknown.

Ethnologically almost no systematic investigations have been made among the Kurds, although a few brief, but accurate, generalized descriptions are to be found.[1] These last, however, have been written by persons, administrators, missionaries, travelers, and the like, who are not ethnologists. This, in itself, need not constitute a deterrent, but their primary purpose in publication was not the portrayal of a culture. It is unnecessary to review here the large number of other types of references to the Kurds, extending from ancient times to the present, except to remark that their most distinctive characteristic is their prejudice

[1]For example, Hay, 1921.

2: Masters E-5 (1951) 1953 MA11 Kurd MA11
Rowanduz
Yezadis MH10



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but must never be struck. For an "unbeliever" to use the curse in the name of religion, of which the full form is la'anatu Llahi 'ala dinek, "the damnation of God on your faith," is an invitation to certain catastrophe.

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There are certain groups in Iraq, neither Muslim, Christian, or Jewish, the Yezidis or "devil-worshippers" of Jebel Sinjar and the Mandaeans of the southern provinces, who, as peaceful farmers and craftsmen, do not often come to the notice of the bulk of the population, and are regarded in the popular mind as curiosities more than anything else. The Yezidi girls are supposed to be "the most beautiful in the world," the same thing said by both Muslims and Christians in Lebanon and Syria of the Druze women. There is no intermarriage between the Muslims and these groups.

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The second division is to be found among Muslims themselves, between those of the Sunna ("Custom") or orthodoxy, whose recognition of the legitimacy of the first four successors of the Prophet is perhaps the best known characteristic, and those of the Shi'ah ("party," from Shi'at 'Ali, "the party of 'Ali"), originally revolutionary, who insist on the primacy of the son-in-law of the Prophet and his descendants. The latter tradition has been the state religion of Iran from the time of the Safavid Shahs (1501-1736), and today includes, in one form, the peoples of Iran, Pakistan, and the agricultural population of southern Iraq. In central and northern

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Iraq the Sunna is represented by most of the Arab groups, 795●
the Kurds, the Turks, and the Turkomans. The conflict be- 779
tween the two, often with violent political expressions, is 175
most the same as that between Catholic and Protestant in [578]
Germany, although there is little analogy in the type of
religious content. The governing class in Iraq, deriving
from Ottoman times, is about half Sunnite, and the dis- 795
session is often phrased along ethnic lines, Arab and Turk 186
against Arab and Persian. Certain practices, such as [302]
staining the beard with henna, are condemned by the Kurds
alternatively as Shiite or Iranian. Curiously, they
despise clitorectomy, in the Middle East purely Arabic and [304]
Negroid, as Farsi, "Persian," despite the fact that the
practice seems to have no record in that country. One
might suppose, particularly in view of the growth of pan-
Islamic movements in recent years, that this distinction
between Sunnite and Shiite was falling into decay. At a
gathering in Rowanduz the investigator, on being informed
by an army officer that he came from the southern provinces,
innocently inquired if he belonged to the Shi'ah. When the
officer replied seriously in the affirmative, there was a
burst of laughter and derision from his fellow officers and
officials, a matter of no little embarrassment. Save on [582]
the highest levels of society, there are few marriages be-
tween Sunnite and Shiite families.

The third division is on ethnic or national lines, 563
which, aside from foreigners and non-Muslims, separates

with each other in Arabic, heavily interlard their speech with English and French words and phrases. The official class can, with legitimacy, claim that it is the more progressive and better educated, but, as if to drive a wedge between itself and its subjects, the adjective baladi, "rustic," is used with fluency and condemnation. As this new "civil elite" continues to assert itself at the expense of its parallel, the landed chieftains, both Kurd and Arab, Westernization has become one of its distinctive marks.

Thus thrown back on themselves for these reasons, the distinctions between Arab and Kurd, and between educated and uneducated, and their insistance on "distance," the officials and officers have of necessity created a social life of their own, exclusively masculine. A private home in the upper part of the town, whose garden overlooks the gorge, was subsidized as a nadi or "club." This building is of a single storey, built on three sides about a flagged courtyard which forms the garden, and encloses only several rooms. Its previous occupant had been an educated effendi whose hobbies were the occult sciences, and he decorated the walls with snakes and other symbols in paint which might lead the uninformed observer to erroneous conclusions in the realm of popular religion. One of the rooms was furnished with chairs and benches, much as a diwakhana, another had a table and chairs for cards, and a third was utilized as a kitchen. Two of the townsmen were hired as servants. In the club one might purchase tea, sherbet, and,

of modern scholarly opinion, constitutes a syncretism of ancient Arabic, Judaic, and Christian beliefs, together with whatever elements of originality the Prophet himself had added. The sacred book of the Muslim ("one who submits"), the adherent of Islam, is the Quran ("recitation" from the command of its messenger to Muhammad, iqra, "recite!"), the revelation of God vouchsafed through the Angel Gabriel to Muhammad in suras (a word originally meaning a course of stones or bricks), or chapters, of a varying number of verses, a total of 114 such chapters making up the entire volume. The townspeople are now, without exception, Muslims, and the everyday import of this faith shall form the basis of the discussion to follow. 779 [174]

With the death of the Prophet, the Islamic world, from that day to this, has been torn by the continual divergence of schools and sects, most of them political in origin, many ephemeral, and a few achieving a dignity of a state religion. Amid the greater divisions of Islam, the people of Rowandux belong to the party of the Sunna ("custom"), or orthodoxy, of which recognition of the legitimacy of the first four successors of the Prophet is perhaps the best known characteristic. With other Sunnite peoples of northern Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, the Kurds are in sharp doctrinal opposition to the Shi'ah ("party," from Shi'at 'Ali, "the party of 'Ali") of southern Iraq and Iran, a state religion in the latter country from the time of the Safavid Shahs (1501-1736), which insists on the primacy of 795

the son-in-law of the Prophet and his descendants. Something of the divisive aversion of the Sunnite Kurd for his eastern neighbor has already been seen, although phrased as much in ethnic as in religious terms. Of the four Medieval Sunnite schools of religious law, Hanifite, Malikite, Shafi'ite, and Hanbalite, the Kurds nominally belong to that founded by Abu Hanifa (d. 767), originally a following noted for its liberal tendencies and the admission of logic in formulating legislation, now, however, crystallized into a rite not differing too greatly from its surviving fellows. 795

Beyond this brief classification, it is of no purpose here to enter into an extended discussion of the theological content of Islam insofar as it does not pertain to daily life, for, not only are these matters exhaustively and competently treated elsewhere, they are largely of no moment to the townsman or chieftain. The investigator was often told, on inquiring into some matter of religion, that "one must ask the mulla these questions," just as many Christians refer weightier queries to their priest or minister. In noting the Shiite insistence that the successors of the Prophet be of his own blood, the sayyid ("lord") or descendant of the Tribe of Muhammad might be mentioned. Many persons in the Rowanduz district, as well as several in the town itself, lay claim to this distinction, which carries with it the prerogative of wearing a green turban and the enjoyment, if they choose to exploit it, of a reputation for sanctity. This descent 771 121 173 554 792 [292]

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Kurdish articles of clothing. It was said that the sanitary towels were washed by the young woman herself in private, but were publicly hung out to dry with all other articles of clothing. 841

Menstruation and menarche in this connexion were mainly a problem for the young unmarried girl. The long nursing period and successive pregnancies made the question of menstruation less topical for the married woman than is the case in our culture. During menstruation a woman is ritually unclean. She must not enter a holy place[37] (see p. 139), must not touch the Coran, which is the reason why it is hung up in the bedroom in a pouch specially sewn for it[38] (see p. 124). Only the big ablution of the whole body can make the woman ritually pure at the end of the menstruation period[37]. The big ablution is also necessary for married couples after intercourse in order to comply with the rules governing prayer (see p. 37); in consequence the family is kept informed as regards sexual relations[39]. [515] [988]

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*Sefwe among the Kurds.* "They are *kaqe*", said both the Arab *mayor* of Sulaimani and the *Arab qā'im maqām* of Rania with a mixture of contempt and horror about the sheikh families in Topzawa and Sargalu. The heads of these two sheikh families were brothers, both married to women born in Sargalu. The sister-in-law of the one was married to the old sheikh at Shadala, lying in the valley between Chermahand and the mountain of Pira Magrun. I was told that it was difficult to obtain much information about this sect. Those who had joined it in the hope of learning something about it, had later not wished to divulge its character and the rites connected with it, which were surrounded by the greatest secrecy. My interpreter suggested that so far as she was aware these consisted of deviations from the general Islamic rules governing decency, but could or would not supply any further information about these mystics. 795

It can, however, be stated that it is not a matter of followers of Ahl-i Haqq, the People of the Divine Truth, known in western Iran as Ali-Ilahi, whose adherents in Kurdistan are called Kizil and are found particularly in the district of Kirkuk, but on the contrary of an offshoot of the Sufi dervish order[39] Naqshbandi[39], Naqshbandiya[39], founded in Bokhara in the 14th century by Muhammad Baha-ud-Din or Baha-eddin, and brought to Kurdistan in the 18th century by Sheikh Maulana Khalid of the Jaf tribe. By him Kak Ahmad, grandfather of Sheikh Mahmud, was later introduced to the Sufi "way", which gradually penetrated deep into remote districts of Southern Kurdistan.

According to Gowan[39], a group of Naqshbandi followers formed under Haji Sheikh Arif a secret society for the practice of exotism. The meeting place of the sect was the village mosque. In the basin of this building, intended for ritual ablution, men and women bathed together naked. Later they wandered together in the mountains. 795 391

According to Edmonds[39] it was a certain Sheikh Abdul Karim of Shadala, near Sargalu, a relative of the Haji Sheikh Arif above-mentioned, who was said to have resuscitated or founded the "way" called "Haqqe". This "way" was based on an ancient document "the Dance of the Mystics"", and represented a radical deviation from the Islamic conventions laid down in the holy law, and the rules of duty. This "way" included transvestitism, bathing in common of men and women in the basin of the mosque, also in company with dogs, the wandering in the mountains of young men and women together, ceremonies where bowls of urine were passed from hand to hand by those present—in a 795 831

1795 8311 word a mixture of indecency and perversion, violently opposed to Islam. For many years the Arab authorities were alarmed by rumours that the Haqqa sect among Kurds was increasing in influence and, centred on Sargalu, was penetrating into neighbouring regions despite defeat that the "teachers", and their "pupils", were repeatedly summoned to Sulaimani for interrogation.

It thus seems that under the influence of neo-platonic ideas the metaphysical speculations of Sufism have at times led to pantheism and doctrines contrary to Islamic law. This has exercised a certain influence on Kurds with whom I dwelt. It is a matter for a religious historian to enlarge upon. I merely point to its existence.

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991 989 *Superstition and witchcraft.* Mention has already been made of features the can be traced back to superstition and sorcery: the sugar strewn over the bride's pieces of clothing before sewing (p. 126), the blow on the bride's head, the food released over her on her arrival at the bridal house (p. 130, 131), and the lump of honey laid in a piece of folded bread and then placed under the mattress on which she will sit on arrival (p. 130). The killing of a fowl on the death of a children also been referred to (p. 142). I shall now discuss the use of amulets, both the visible and crossadvertion, the importance attached to reproductions of the holy hand, visits to saints' graves, and finally, the existence of rag trees and rag poles among the Kurds, and the sacrifice of animals as a healing ceremony.

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989 525 *Amulets.* In Southern Kurdistan there were to be found among women in the aristocratic village quiters, in the humble village milieu and in the uneducated urban milieu. They were not used within the educated urban milieu.

Amulets are supposed to protect against *jinns*, devils created by fire[24], and to avert the evil eye. 989 They were of two kinds: visible and encased. The first type consists of a kind of ornament and is therefore difficult to distinguish from jewellery without magical qualities. They could be purchased in the bazar and were thus a commercial commodity which in virtue of their colour, form and material contained a latent force that could protect their owners from all evil. In Kurdistan both dead objects and living beings could have these magic objects hung upon them.

301 989 A chain of large blue glass beads was hung around the neck of a horse (Srkan); a blue button was hung on a churning frame (Topawa); and a blue button was fastened to a Singer sewing machine (Kirkuk). This was done to protect the animal, and the products made by the objects, from evil [822] influence. It has often been pointed out that blue affords protection against the evil eye[25].

The same blue colour is found in the small articles of the were by children. A necklet (E. 2287a), 989 0.28 m. long, for a baby is composed of black and white glass beads in which is hung a light-blue 858 button and two small plastic reproductions of the holy hand[26], the one red and the other blue. In 301 addition, buttons (E. 2287b-c) for sewing on children's clothes[27] and a sampler (E. 2287d) made of light-blue glass beads, also intended for sewing on children's clothes. Finally, a silver chain is meant to be worn diagonally across the chest from the left shoulder[28]. The chain (E. 2301) was acquired in

S: Edmonds G-5 (1923, 1945) 1957 MA11 Kurd MA11

# THE KURDS OF IRAQ

*C. J. Edmonds*

## 1.

KURDISTAN is the country inhabited by the Kurds as a homogeneous community. It is divided between Turkey, Persia and Iraq with small overlaps into Syria and the Soviet Union, and its boundaries do not coincide with any international frontiers or internal administrative divisions.

Iraqi Kurdistan is bounded on the north and east by the Turkish and Persian frontiers, where the population on both sides is almost entirely Kurdish. On the south-west the internal ethnical boundary lies approximately along the railway from the Syrian frontier to Mosul city on the Tigris and thence a straight line to Mandali on the Persian frontier. The majority of the Kurds are thus concentrated in the four liwas[1] which in Ottoman times constituted the vilayet of Mosul: Mosul (35% of the total population), Arbil (91%), Kirkuk (12%) and Sulaimani (100%). Kurds also have a majority in the two adjacent *qadhas*[2] of Khanaqin and Mandali. Other than the Kurds, there are villages of Chaldean Christians near Mosul city to the north and east, and about 10,000 Assyrians compactly settled in the highlands of the Amadiya region: there are also colonies of Turkomans in a string of towns, large and small, along the great highway leading from Mosul through Arbil, Altun Köprü, Kirkuk and Kifri towards Baghdad. On the other hand there are islands of Kurds outside these limits, the most interesting being the Jabal Sinjar, west of Mosul, where most of the inhabitants are Yazidis, the people often misleadingly described as devil worshippers.

The Kurdish population of Iraq can be estimated with a fair degree of accuracy, on the basis of the census of 1947, at about 900,000 or nearly one fifth of the total for the whole country. No statistics are available for Persian Kurdistan but a similar figure would be a reasonable guess. The Turkish census of 1945 gives the number of persons whose mother tongue was Kurdish as one and a half million; there is reason to think that the real number of Kurds is higher, perhaps two millions. The religion of the great majority of the Kurds in all three countries is Sunni Muslim; the mystical dervish orders have adherents in all parts of Kurdistan.

Of the larger towns Sulaimani is entirely and Arbil predominantly Kurdish. Smaller townships in which Kurds form the whole or the large

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1 [Territorial-administrative units with villages sub-divided into liwas which are subdivided into qadhas.—Analyst]

792 holy books from which they can tell of the past and the future.
559 They also sell good-luck charms, love-charms, charms against sickness, etc. Being residents of the larger towns, however, they only appear on the village scene as transients of rather low status.

Diagram No. 6. The scales and contours of the religious field.

793 *The Mullah.* Whereas the position of a *Shaikh* depends upon his
559 rating on the scales of sanctity and sacred powers, the position of the mullah is related to the scale of sanctity, and to a scale of learning and piety. High rating on the scale of sanctity springs directly from the office, while the degree of learning and piety depends upon the individual's behavior, and is consequently variable.

793 The position as mullah is a true status position, since it defines a
795 place in an institutional hierarchy — that of the larger church
559 organization — but since it is related also to the scale of piety, the actual relative status ascribed to specific mullahs in their villages may vary considerably. Thus again, the lack of development of the concept of an *office* has its effect; any seperation of the individual's official and private capacity is impossible, and no clear definition of the status of the mullah, as divorced from the individual achievements of a specific mullah, is possible. The very weak regional organization of the church is in part responsible for this — indeed, it is

7: Barth E-S (1951) 1953 MAll Kurd MAll

misleading to speak of an inclusive church organization in the sense one knows it in the West. The actual qualifications of individual mullahs vary tremendously, and financial arrangements for the support of the Mosque are, as far as village mosques are concerned, entirely in the hands of the local community. Yet traditionalism and informal controls give a certain unity and enforce certain limits on deviations from a vague norm.

The position as mullah is an achieved status with completely open recruitment. Successful application to the study of the Koran leads eventually to initiation. There is a tendency for *Sheikhs* and *Seyyids* to be over-represented, but this seems primarily due to a higher frequency of religious inclinations, resulting from their autocentric bias in orientation. Frequently a dervish will be willing to support his son through some or all of the necessary years of reading and study, and thus achieve for the son what was beyond the reach of the father. At times, through an early interest in the teachings of the village mullah, a boy in a secularly oriented family will find his way into the religious field. A striking number of the students are blind, and depend in their studies on the help of their friends.

The traditional pattern is for the student to spend an unspecified number of years roaming from mosque to mosque, seeking out the teachers of high repute and remaining with each for whatever length of time he wishes (see Appendix III). In this period, as well as studying the Koran and the legal interpretation of the text, the student should become familiar with other religious writing, in Persian as well as in Arabic. Finally, when the student and whatever teacher he happens to be with at the time feels he is prepared, he is made to give a sermon, and after a ritual is given the white headdress of the mullah, as well as a diploma confirming his status.

During his studies, the future mullah is dependent on his family or on individual charity for his subsistence. Later, as a full-fledged mullah, he must make whatever arrangements he can. The positions in the mosques of the towns are now government supported, but in the village the office is supported by local resources only. The community expresses its wish to have a mullah and the extent of its ability to pay — generally by revenue on dedicated land and a